



Catholic Faith, Life & Creed

A Complete Catechesis for Christian Living

Doctrinal Catechesis Session
Mary Birmingham

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING



Sperindio Cagnola, *Works of Mercy (Feed the hungry)*, 1514 -24, Paruzzaro, San Marcello Church



Begin with the Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Opening Prayer

Pray aloud together:

Grant us, Lord God,
a vision of our land as your love would make it:
a land where the weak are protected,
and none go hungry or poor;
a land where the benefits of civilized life are shared,
and everyone can enjoy them;
a land where different races and cultures live in tolerance and mutual respect;
a land where peace is built with justice,
and justice is guided by love.
And give us the inspiration and courage to build it,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



Note to the Catechist

There may be more material than you can use in a one-hour session. Select and arrange accordingly. Use questions and material that is best suited for your particular group.



Read the connecting statement

to draw the line between this week's liturgy and this chosen doctrinal theme.

This connecting statement is found in the *Breaking Open the Word* worksheet for this week.

Catholic Faith, Life & Creed Version 2.0

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Version 2.0 reflects all recent revisions in
the Roman Missal.

NIHIL OBSTAT
Rev. Steven Olds
Censor Liborum

IMPRIMATUR
† Most Rev. John Noonan
Bishop of Orlando

June 27, 2011

Editors: Bill Huebsch, Diana
Macalintal, & Nick Wagner

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Sharing Human Experience

Catechist leads participants in a small group sharing. Break into small groups (three or four). Remind participants to make time for all in the group to respond to the questions.

- ▶ How we live and act as a Catholic Christian is defined by theological principles.
- ▶ Once we embrace principles, we are led to action.
- ▶ Principles prompt action—they direct our choices.
- ▶ Principled people always stand for something. They know what they believe and are willing to stand by it.
- ▶ Principled people are led to do something or to choose not to do something.

- ▶ Have you ever met a person you would describe as a principled person?
- ▶ What are the characteristics within this person that would make you think this person has principles?
- ▶ What are some of the principles you live by?

Catechist uses their responses to launch into a discussion about Catholic Social Teaching. Here are some key points with which to begin.

The US Bishops document, “Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions” and the *United States Catholic Catechism* defines the principles upon which Catholic Social Teaching is based.

Catholic Social Teaching is not always popular. It often flies in the face of our patriotism and our limited sense of fair play. But as we know, what is right is not always the popular thing to do.

Catechist invites participant to respond to the following questions with one or two other persons.

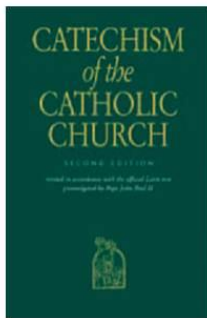
- ▶ Have you ever stood up for someone or have you ever done the right thing when it was not a popular thing to do?
- ▶ Do you know anyone else who similarly stood up for someone or did the right then when it was not a popular thing to do?
- ▶ What were the results? What did you learn from the experience?

Catechist shares story from his or her own life and/or shares one of the following other stories: neophyte who cared for a homeless woman with end-stage breast cancer and/or the group of friends who stood up for a friend who was accused of murder and who eventually took her own life. (See appendix #1, #2.)



Keeping time

Note to catechist: There may not be enough time to address all the reflection questions after each section. You may need to choose which reflection questions you want to address if time is a consideration.



Sharing Catholic Doctrine

Drawn from the Catechism of the Catholic Church

Refer to articles 2419-2449

- ▶ Catholic Social Teaching is a collection of Church teachings that are designed to reflect the Church's gospel-driven social mission.
- ▶ These teachings address the concerns, issues, and challenges of contemporary society.
- ▶ They flow from gospel imperatives and the biblical covenant God forged with the human race at the dawn of creation.
- ▶ The Church challenges, invites, and calls all of the baptized, rich people and poor people together, to address the needs of the poor and oppressed peoples of our world.
- ▶ The Church further exhorts its members to work toward eliminating and/or at least reducing the effects of poverty, injustice, and oppression of all peoples everywhere. When Christ exhorted his disciples to continue his mission of establishing the reign of God, the world he envisioned was God's original intention for the world which is the harmony, peace, and justice of Eden.
- ▶ Working toward a just society is an act of faith; it is a deeply religious act.
- ▶ While social justice issues often stir heated debate and end up in political and ideological categories, we must not allow such categories to define our response to Christ's command in the gospel to care for the poor, the oppressed, the widows, orphans, the sick, the dying, and those on the marginalized edge of society.
- ▶ As Catholics, we are called to bring the healing hand of Christ to those in need, the courageous voice of the prophet to those in power, and the gospel message of

love, justice, and peace to a suffering world.

- ▶ The Introduction to the Bishop's document, "Sharing Catholic Social Teaching," reminds us that Catholic social teaching is rooted in what we know and understand about the Trinity. God's nature is communal; a loving relationship exists between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- ▶ Scriptures teach us that human beings are made in the image and likeness of God. As such, we too are communal and social beings. We do not live as isolated inhabitants of some deserted island. We are part of the human family with inherent rights and responsibilities as members of that family.
- ▶ Our reciprocal covenant relationship with God demands that we uplift the human community, enter into loving relationship with God's people and work toward establishing peace and justice in that human community.
- ▶ Our Christian response to the social mission of the gospel flows from our intimacy with Christ. Just as he shed his blood, so too are we called to bleed for the poor among us. Commitment to Catholic social teaching assumes that one is converted to Christ with heart, mind, and soul.

Principles gleaned from the Bishop's document, "Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions" and the *United States Catholic Catechism* are as follows:

Life and Dignity of the Human Person

- ▶ Each human being possesses dignity. Each human being is created in the image and likeness of God. Each human being is redeemed by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Thus, each human being is worthy of dignity and respect. Each human being is a valued member of the human community (SCST, P. 25).
- ▶ Catholic social teaching is inexorably connected to our understanding of human life and human dignity. Every human being, redeemed by Christ and made in the image and likeness of God—is worthy of dignity and respect.
- ▶ The honor and respect due each person is afforded to him or her from the first breath taken to the last breath drawn. Human dignity is a gratuitous gift from God; it cannot be earned or merited.
- ▶ Belief in the sanctity of human life and inherent dignity of each person is the foundation of all of our social teachings.
- ▶ All have dignity regardless of race, sex, age, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, employment or economic status, health, intelligence, achievement or any other differentiating characteristic.
- ▶ Simply being human establishes one's dignity.

- ▶ Today this value is threatened by abortion, assisted suicide, euthanasia, the death penalty, and the many ways in which people are treated with disregard for their human dignity.
- ▶ We believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.

Catechist shares these or similar stories: appendix #3, story of the teen group or the homeless man. Catechist invites participants to gather in small groups of three or four and respond to the following question, then surface insights in the wider group.

- ▶ Are you aware of a situation in your workplace, civic community, or parish in which human dignity is not respected?
- ▶ Have you ever thought about your own participation in not respecting the human dignity of others?
- ▶ What does God have to say about not respecting one of his children?

Call to Family, Community, and Participation

- ▶ The human person is social as well as sacred. Our Catholic tradition teaches that human beings grow and achieve fulfillment in community. The family is the central social institution. Family life needs to be supported by other institutions and governments. Excessive individualism, competition, and greed mitigate against community and the common good.
- ▶ We believe people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and wellbeing of all, especially the poor and vulnerable.

Catechist shares the following or similar story. Appendix #5 and 6. Story of woman and teenage daughters and corporate scandals and greed. Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions in the wider group.

- ▶ Can you think of a situation in your workplace, civic community, or parish, where family life is not supported to the detriment of the whole?
- ▶ Can you think of an instance in which greed, power or excessive individualism has hurt the common good in your area?

Rights and Responsibilities

- ▶ People have a fundamental right to life and to those things necessary for human decency, such as food, shelter, health care, education, and employment.
- ▶ People have a right to participate in decisions that affect their lives.
- ▶ Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities to respect the rights of others and to work for the common good.
- ▶ When people lack the basic necessities to live a life of dignity, their fundamental

rights are being denied.

- ▶ In a world where some speak mostly of “rights” and others mostly of “responsibilities,” the Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met.

For example:

- ▶ Fact: In order to get medical treatment in the state of Florida for mental illness, the mentally ill person has to attempt suicide or homicide in the presence of medical personnel while committed for a period of three days. Families are powerless to get help for their adult mentally ill children who are too ill to help themselves. Florida is 49th in the nation when it comes to care for the mentally ill.
- ▶ Fact: Addiction is listed as a disease by the AMA, thus, treatment for addiction is a basic human right. We continue to build more and more prisons, yet in Brevard County, Florida, there are only 15 beds for treatment for drug addiction.

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

- ▶ Catholic teaching proclaims that the moral test of a society is how it treats its most vulnerable members.
- ▶ This calls us to look at public policy decisions in terms of how they affect the poor.
- ▶ In our present society, a minority of 20% of the people control more than 80% of the world’s resources, leaving few resources to be shared by the majority of the people.
- ▶ In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgment (Mt. 25:31-46) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions in the wider group.

- ▶ Is it possible that there are people in our community who are unable to participate in the life of the community because they are poor?
- ▶ What should be our response?
- ▶ What might we do about it?

The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

- ▶ People have a right to humane working conditions, productive work, and fair wages.
- ▶ The economy exists to serve the people, not the other way around.
- ▶ Many corporations have lost sight of the rights of workers and look only at the profit margin. From 1988 to 1998, the salaries of corporate executives grew by 15% while those of the bottom level workers grew by only 1%, not enough to

meet even the rise in cost of living. The gap is no doubt much wider today in the midst of this economic crisis.

- ▶ Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation.
- ▶ If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected, which includes the rights to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to organize and join unions, to private property, and to economic initiative.
- ▶ Workers have the right to safe working conditions, the right to participate in decisions that affect them in the workplace, and the right to security in case of sickness, disability, unemployment, or old age.

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following question in the wider group.

- ▶ Who are the people in our society who are underpaid, who suffer from inhumane working conditions and corporate excesses?
- ▶ What should be our response to those who simply shrug it off as the price of having a good economy?

Solidarity

- ▶ We are all one human family, and we are responsible for the well-being of one another.
- ▶ This responsibility reaches across national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences.
- ▶ Indifference to the pain and suffering of others has no place in our interdependent society. We are all responsible for all.
- ▶ Learning to practice the virtue of solidarity means that 'loving our neighbor' has global dimensions in an interdependent world.

Catechist shares the following story: 9/11 STORY, appendix #7

Promotion of Peace and Disarmament

- ▶ Catholic teaching understands peace as a positive, action-oriented concept.
- ▶ Peace is not just the absence of war.
- ▶ It involves mutual respect and collaboration between peoples and nations. There is a close relationship between peace and justice.
- ▶ Peace is the fruit of justice and is dependent upon right order among human beings and human institutions.
- ▶ Just cause theory of war:
 - Catechism #2309: "The damage inflicted by the aggressor on the nation or community of nations [is] lasting, grave, and certain." Is there clear and adequate evidence of a direct and imminent attack of a grave nature?
- ▶ Legitimate authority. The moral credibility of the use of military force also depends heavily on whether there is legitimate authority for using force. For

example, there must be compliance with national law in each nation, broad consensus, international sanction, probability of success and proportionality. The use of force must have “serious prospects for success and “must not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated” (Catechism, #2309).

- ▶ We are to ask the question: How would war affect the civilian population, in the short- and long-term?

Catechist leads wider group discussion.

- ▶ Do our present theaters of war fit the just war requirements?

Care for God’s Creation

- ▶ All of creation is a gift from God and should be respected as such.
- ▶ We show our respect by the way we care for the earth as stewards of all that has been entrusted to us.
- ▶ We need to examine how our excessive consumerism and poor environmental practices are exploiting the earth and take measures to correct our destructive patterns.
- ▶ Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan; it is a requirement of our faith.
- ▶ We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God’s creation.
- ▶ It does not take a rocket scientist to know the impact of oil spills, deforestation, pollution, depletion of our rain forests; it is already having observable impact on our environment.

Catechist leads wider group discussion.

- ▶ What are some ways that we show a lack of respect for our environment?

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions in small groups and then share brief, general insights in the wider group. (Select the questions accordingly depending on the time allotted.)

- ▶ When it comes to the principles of Catholic Social teaching were there any that: Challenged you? Affirmed you? Troubled you?
- ▶ When you consider your communities at the local, civic, parish, state, and national level, who are the people that are not treated as our Church insists they deserve to be treated? What issues are particularly important at this time?
- ▶ Refer to your handout. Choose one principle of Catholic Social Teaching that interests you the most. Why does it interest you? Who are most impacted by the principle you chose? Do you know anyone who is impacted by the principle you chose? What is currently being done to correct the wrong? If not, what should and could be done? What might you do to help?



Community Connections

Catechist invites participants to relate what was shared today to some experience in their lives. Catechist shares an experience from his or life and invites others to do the same. See appendix #8.



Liturgy, Scripture, and doctrine challenge us to transform our lives so that we can go out and help transform the world.

Catechist informs the group of any parish activity taking place and makes arrangements for group participation. For example:

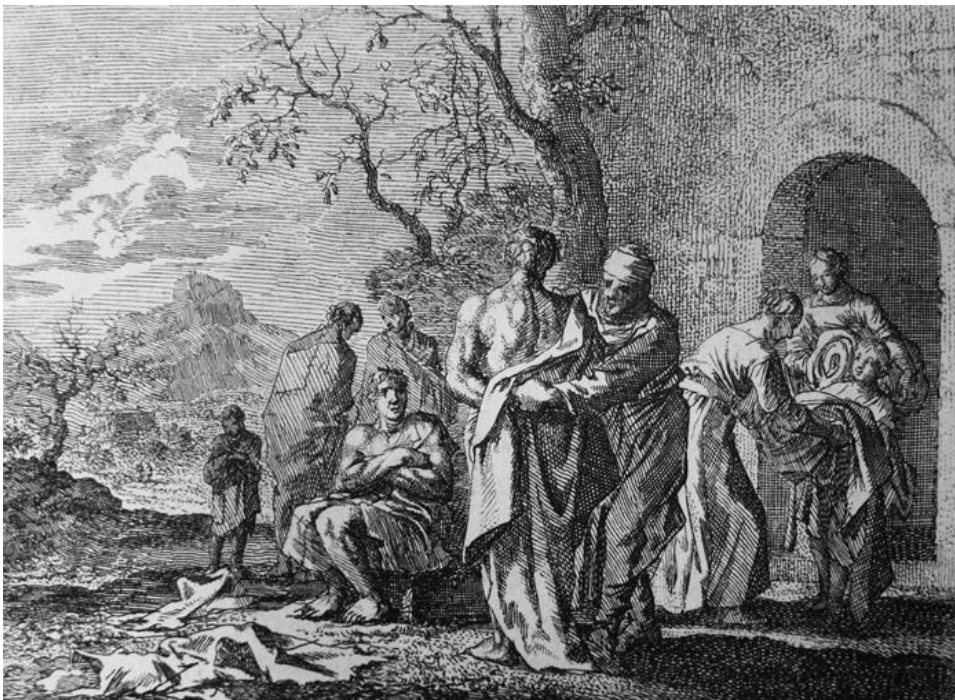
- ✓ In light of all that was shared, what is taking place in the parish this week that reflects Catholic Social Teaching? For example, “This week our parish is responsible for cooking the meal on Wednesday night for our city’s homeless shelter. We are going to meet at daily bread to serve the meal and then we will reflect on our experience after we have cleaned up.”



Mystagogy & your decision for change

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following challenges.

- ▶ What, if any, behaviors or attitudes are you willing to change in response to today's liturgy and session on Catholic social teaching?
- ▶ Which, if any, spiritual or corporal works of mercy are you willing to commit to do in response to today's liturgy and session?
- ▶ What, if any, action are you willing to take in response to what we have shared today?



apud: phillip medhurst WORKS OF MERCY: CLOTHING THE NAKED. MATTHEW 25:36. JAN LUYKEN excudit: harry kossuth

Jan Luykan: Works of Mercy: Clothing the naked, public domain



Closing Prayer

Option 1: If this is a catechumenal session, end the session with intercessions, doxology ["Glory be to the Father..."], a minor rite—a blessing or minor exorcism, RCIA # 90-97.

Option 2: Intercessions, doxology, opening prayer B 1: #22, Masses and Prayers for Various Needs and Occasions: "For Peace and Justice," Sacramentary.

Option 3: Use the prayer below:

Let us pray for peace with a greater justness in ours and every land:

God of justness and mercy,
we pray for an end to terrorism in any form.

We pray for wisdom that will bring greater peace in our world.

We pray for understanding and compassion
that will safeguard the innocent and feed and find home for all refugees
and all who suffer.

We pray for companionship and strength for all who mourn.

We pray in Jesus' love. Amen.

— From Cardinal Roger Mahony, *Los Angeles*, Oct 7, 2001



apud: phillip medhurst WORKS OF MERCY: VISITING THE PRISONER. MATTHEW 25:36. JAN LUYKEN excudit: harry kossuth

Jan Luyken: Works of Mercy: Visiting the prisoner, public domain

Appendix

1. STORY OF NEOPHYTE WHO CARED FOR HOMELESS WOMAN WITH CANCER

A neophyte (newly baptized person) befriended a homeless woman she met one day on one of her daily walks. She discovered that the poor woman had end-stage breast cancer. Her body was wretched. She had bleeding, ulcerated lesions on her body—truly the image of a modern day leper. The woman had no one in her life. She lived on the streets. The hospital sent her “home” to die. Her home? A cardboard box under a bridge.

This faith-driven neophyte was moved with compassion and made the decision to take the homeless woman into her home and care for her needs until she died. She washed her, nursed her ulcers, and held her hand in those last agonizing days. The neophyte’s family was infuriated that she would take in someone off the street. Undaunted by their criticism and true to her convictions, she became the hands and feet of Christ, much like Mother Theresa was for the dying of Calcutta. She would, to this day, say that she is the one who had been gifted in that encounter. She was given insight and a glimpse into the compassionate heart of Christ.

2. STORY OF STANDING UP FOR THE ACCUSED MURDERER

A very active parishioner was an adoptions counselor for a small-town, local Department of Children and Families. She was a loyal friend and exemplary parishioner. Unbeknownst to all, she embezzled a large sum of money, murdered the person who could testify against her, and then killed herself.

Her friends refused to believe the charges against her. Her life of discipleship had been exemplary, and it was inconceivable that their friend was capable of such a crime. In the face of public outcry, they stood before the community and witnessed to what was good in her life.

Even though it was later determined that the charges were indeed true, the friends were happy they had shared what had been good and holy about this woman’s life. They relied on the mercy of God to save the sinner and rested in the contentment that they had done the right thing in the face of opposition and would do it again if called upon to do so.

3. STORY OF TEEN GATHERING

In a large urban parish—at a teen gathering—when reflecting on the gospel that prostitutes and tax collectors may enter heaven before the righteous—the misguided guest speaker informed the teens that they have a responsibility to shun homosexuals. They are not to talk to them or in any way associate with them, as gays are going straight to hell. We certainly have a responsibility to teach what the Church teaches about homosexuality—but to demand that gays be shunned, cast out of the community

and to insist that a gay person is eternally damned (along with anyone associated with them) goes against Catholic moral teaching. One teenager courageously asked the speaker how they knew the homosexual was going straight to hell and whatever happened to our teaching about forgiveness and the mercy of Jesus? Out of the mouths of babes!

4. STORY OF HOMELESS MAN

A homeless man was arrested for vagrancy. On his citation, it read: Violation: “Standing in front of Winn Dixie.” The homeless have become such a blight in our society, that we do not want to see them in our antiseptic worlds. They are not even given the right to stand where they can be seen by tourists and ordinary citizens.

5. STORY OF DIVORCED WOMAN AND TWO TEENAGE DAUGHTERS.

A divorced woman had two teenage daughters. Her husband moved out of state and stopped paying child support. This forced her to have two jobs in order to pay the bills. Her teens were running wild with no supervision. If she were to go on welfare, she would not have had enough to pay her bills. The state was threatening to take her children away from her for lack of supervision. In this instance—no agency—not civic or church—stepped up to the plate to help this woman in her plight. This is a case where institutions have a responsibility to help support the family life of those who are powerless to do so on their own.

6. STORY OF ENRON

Executives of Enron, AIG, Ponzi schemes, and other corporate scandals have robbed families of their security and retirement out of greed and the lust for power.

7. STORY OF 9/11

My daughter lived across the street from the World Trade Center. We traveled to ground zero to bring her home. We were so grateful that her life had been spared. Had she left her apartment five minutes later, it could have been a far different story. One of the most remarkable sights we encountered took place in Union Square. People who were most affected by the disaster—those who lost loved ones—reached out to others across racial, ethnic, religious lines. We observed an African American gentleman singing in a corner of the park. As he began, “Amazing Grace,” Muslims, African Americans, Asians, and Caucasians moved to him, took his hand and sang with tear-filled passion: “Amazing grace how sweet the sound...”

8. MY STORY.

My son suffers from mental illness. People with mental illnesses are the lepers of today. The police have been called in the past simply because this very sick young man sat on our front porch. He did not look as though he belonged in our middle class

neighborhood. The person who called the police was not only a neighbor, but she was a friend and well known parishioner in my parish.

Laws prevent us from seeking help for our son. At times, I have wondered if I should become a state-wide or national advocate for the mentally ill. After much prayer and discernment, I have come to realize, however, that I am called to reach out *one person at a time* and help families who are as devastated as we were in the early stages of the illness. I have had the privilege of helping both the mentally ill and their families. I know well what it means to be in solidarity with the broken. Some people are called to take serious action toward changing laws, others are called to love and support the afflicted. That is my role for now.

Handout on Catholic Social Teaching

How we live and act as a Catholic Christian is defined by theological principles.

- ▶ Principles lead to action.
- ▶ Principled people know what they believe and are willing to stand by it.
- ▶ The US Bishops document, “Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions” defines the principles upon which Catholic social teaching is based—principles that include family, religious, social, political, technological, recreational and cultural issues.

Overview of Catholic Social Teaching

- ▶ Catholic social teaching—reflects Church’s social mission and are rooted in biblical values.
- ▶ All are called to work to eliminate the effect of poverty
- ▶ Jesus calls us to this mission.
- ▶ All are called to bring the healing hand of Christ to those in need

Principles gleaned from the Bishop’s document.

1. Life and Dignity of the Human Person

- ▶ “Every human being is created in God’s image and is redeemed by Christ and therefore is invaluable and worthy of respect as a member of the human family” (P. 25).
- ▶ Being human establishes your dignity.

2. Call to Family, Community, and Participation

- ▶ The human person is social as well as sacred.
- ▶ The family is the central social institution
- ▶ Family life needs to be supported by other institutions and governments.

3. Rights and Responsibilities

- ▶ People have a fundamental right to life and to those things necessary for human decency, such as food, shelter, health care, education, and employment.

4. Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

- ▶ Catholic teaching proclaims that the moral test of a society is how it treats its most vulnerable members.
- ▶ Our tradition recalls the story of the last judgment (Mt. 25:31-46) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.

5. The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

- ▶ The economy exists to serve the people, not the other way around.
- ▶ Work is a form of continuing participation in God's creation.
- ▶ If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected, including the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to organize and join unions, to private property, and to economic initiative.
- ▶ Workers have the right to a safe working conditions, the right to participate in decisions that affect them in the workplace, and the right to security in case of sickness, disability, unemployment, or old age.

6. Solidarity

- ▶ We are all one human family, and we are responsible for the well being of each other.
- ▶ This responsibility reaches across national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences.

7. Promotion of Peace and Disarmament

- ▶ Peace involves mutual respect and collaboration between peoples and nations.
- ▶ Just cause theory of war: Catechism 2309: "the damage inflicted by the aggressor on the nation or community of nations [is] lasting, grave, and certain." Is there clear and adequate evidence of a direct and imminent attack of a grave nature?
 - *Legitimate authority.* The moral credibility of the use of military force also depends heavily on whether there is legitimate authority for using force, that is, compliance with U.S. constitutional imperatives, broad consensus, international sanction.
 - *Probability of success and proportionality.* The use of force must have "serious prospects for success" and "must not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated" (Catechism, #2309). How would war affect the civilian population, in the short- and long-term?

8. Care for God's Creation

- ▶ All of creation is a gift from God and should be respected as such.
- ▶ We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation.